

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3326

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 7925

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, KS

SUBJECT: ROKG CONFISCATES OPPOSITION NDP NEWSPAPER

1. SUMMARY: KCIA RAIDED OPPOSITION NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY'S HEADQUARTERS THE EVENING OF 9/5 AND CONFISCATED MOST RECENT ISSUE OF NDP'S DEMOCRATIC FRONT NEWSPAPER. END SUMMARY.

2. NDP SOURCE INFORMED EMBOFF THAT KCIA SURROUNDED PARTY HEADQUARTERS THE EVENING OF 9/5, FORCED THEIR WAY INTO THE BUILDING, CONFISCATED ALL 40,000 REMAINING COPIES OF THE PARTY NEWSPAPER, SCATTERED THE TYPE WHICH HAD BEEN SET, AND TOOK THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLICITY AND THE MANAGING DIRECTOR INTO CUSTODY (THE TWO MEN WERE LATER RELEASED). DURING THE COURSE OF THE DAY PARTY MEMBERS HAD SOLD 20,000 COPIES OF THE EDITION ON THE STREETS OUT OF A TOTAL PRESS RUN OF 60,00.

REPORTEDLY THE PAPER, WHICH SELLS FOR 30 WON, WAS SOLD FOR AS MUCH AS 500 AND 1000 WON TO BUYERS WHO DID NOT ASK FOR CHANGE.

3. ROKG OBJECTIONS TO THE PAPER REPORTEDLY CENTER ON THREE ARTICLES:

(A) ONE ACCUSES LEE SUN CHUNG, MINISTER OF JUSTICE, OF PERJURING HIMSELF IN HIS TESTIMONY TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY'S LEGISLATIVE AND JUDICIAL COMMITTEE BY FIRST STATING AND THEN DENYING THAT HYUNDAI CHAIRMAN CHUNG HAD HAD A HAND IN SELECTING RECIPIENTS OF APARTMENTS IN THE HYUNDAI APARTMENT SCANDAL. THE ARTICLE ALSO

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STATED THAT THE FACT MINISTER LEE WENT OUT OF HIS WAY AND INSISTED ON DENYING ANY CABINET-LEVEL INVOLVEMENT IN THE APARTMENT SCANDAL SUGGESTS THAT IN FACT THERE WAS SUCH INVOLVEMENT.

(B) THE SECOND ARTICLE DISCUSSES THE "BRAVE PROFESSORS" OF CHONNAM UNIVERSITY WHO ARE "SUFFERING". IT REPORTS THAT ONE PROFESSOR HAS BEEN CHARGED UNDER

EM-9, AND 10 OTHERS FIRED FROM THEIR POSTS FOR THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE 6/13 "STATEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PRINCIPLES" WHICH STATED THAT DEMOCRACY HAS FAILED TO BECOME DEEPLY ROOTED IN KOREA, OPENING THE POSSIBILITY THAT A TOTALITARIAN STATE WILL DEVELOP.

(C) THE THIRD ARTICLE STATES THAT A FAIR ELECTION IS IMPOSSIBLE UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF EM-9.

4. ACCORDING TO SOURCE, NDP REPRESENTATIVES CALLED ON THE PRIME MINISTER AND ON THE KCIA TO DEMAND THE RETURN OF THE CONFISCATED NEWSPAPERS AND PERMISSION TO DISTRIBUTE THEM. THE PRIMIN DENIED ANY KNOWLEDGE OF THE MATTER AND SAID HE WOULD HAVE TO LOOK INTO IT. THE KCIA ADMITTED THAT THE KCIA INVESTIGATION BUREAU WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE RAID. THE GOVERNMENT SAYS IT WILL ALLOW THE NDP TO PRINT A NEW EDITION IF THE THREE OBJECTIONABLE ARTICLES ARE DELETED. VIEWPOINTS WITHIN THE NDP ARE DIVIDED ON WHETHER TO ACCEPT OR TO REJECT THE GOVERNMENT COMPROMISE, WITH LEE CHUL-SEUNG TAKING A FIRM STAND AGAINST ACCEPTANCE.

5. COMMENT: WE DOUBT KCIA ACTION INTENDED TO MORE THAN GIVE OPPOSITION PARTY WARNING OF THE LIMITS ON CRITICISM OF THE ROKG.

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